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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
12 October 1966

NSA review completed

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HIGHLIGHTS

The six southern-oriented cabinet ministers who submitted a joint letter of resignation to Premier Ky appear to have relaxed their hard-line position; this may ease the ten-day-old cabinet crisis. Rumanian Premier Maurer apparently made an unannounced trip to North Vietnam between 1 and 5 October.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: US Marines in Operation PRAIRIE reported killing 16 Communist soldiers on 12 October in a five-hour battle just south of the DMZ (Para. 2). A total of 33 enemy troops were killed during a four-hour engagement in Binh Dinh Province as US soldiers in Operation IRVING continue to strike hard against enemy units (Para. 3).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: The dissension in Premier Ky's cabinet appears to be easing, although it is not completely resolved (Paras. 1-2). The rules and credentials committees of the Constituent Assembly are about half through with their procedural work (Para. 3). The I Corps commander, General Lam, is keeping an eye on assembly proceedings (Para. 4).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: Two USAF F-105s apparently destroyed a surface-to-air missile complex located closer to the DMZ than any site yet discovered in North Vietnam (Paras. 1-3).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Rumanian Premier Maurer apparently made an unannounced trip to North Vietnam from 1 to 5 October. He is a third

East European official to visit Hanoi in recent weeks (Paras. 1-3).

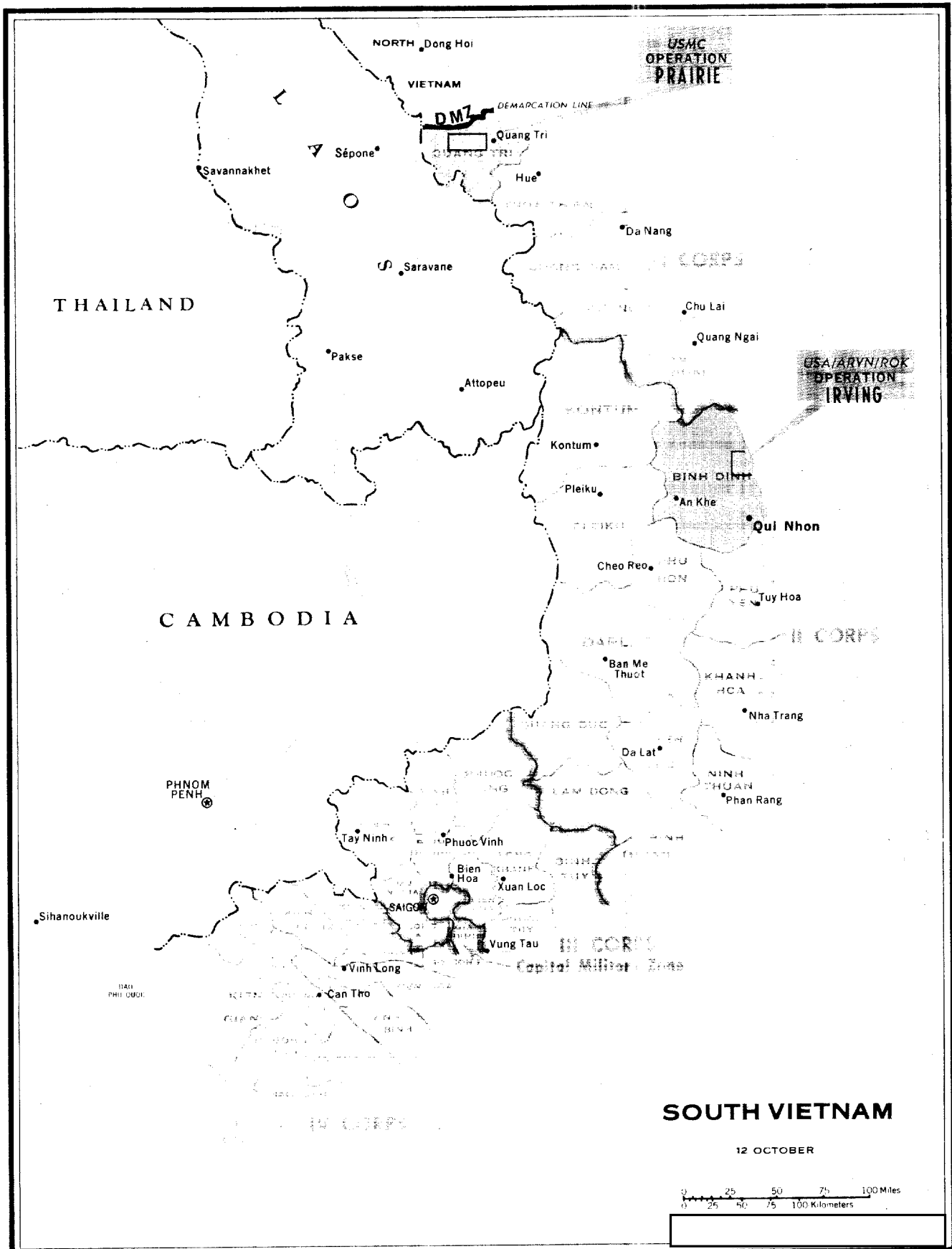
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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Contact between allied and Communist forces continued to be light throughout South Vietnam on 12 October. The only reported activity was in northernmost Quang Tri Province near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and in coastal Binh Dinh Province.

2. US Marines participating in Operation PRAIRIE engaged a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) company which attempted to probe American defense positions just south of the DMZ. In the ensuing five-hour battle, 16 enemy soldiers were killed. The marines also reported seizing several Communist weapons, including a heavy antiaircraft machine gun mounted on wheels. American losses were light--two killed and six wounded.

Activity in Binh Dinh Province

3. Elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division in Operation IRVING battled with a Communist force of undetermined size early on 12 October in Binh Dinh Province. During the four-hour encounter, 33 enemy troops were killed and eight captured. An enemy ammunition dump, located in an area about 30 miles northwest of Qui Nhon, was captured by US forces. The dump contained more than 120,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition, 68 mortar rounds, and other assorted ammunition.

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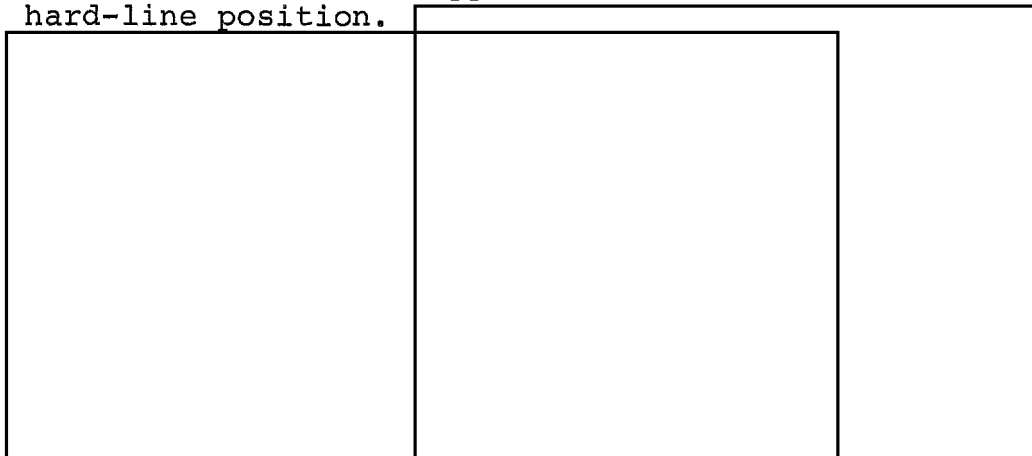
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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The six southern-oriented cabinet ministers who submitted a joint letter of resignation to Premier Ky on 6 October appear to have relaxed their hard-line position.

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2. News accounts of the discord between the southerners in the cabinet and the northern military functionaries close to Ky claim that the ministers have asked that police director Loan be replaced. There have been no reports, however,

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that the "resignation" group intends to press Ky for any stern action toward Loan, who is the primary subject of southern criticism.

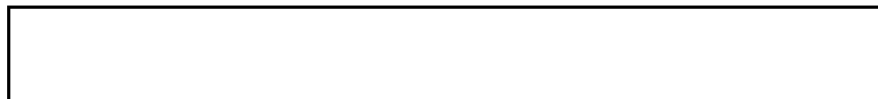
Constituent Assembly

3. At the morning session of the Constituent Assembly on 11 October, the credentials committee reported that eight of the 23 deputies whose seats were contested have been validated. The committee is still reviewing the evidence of the other 15 contested winners. The procedural rules committee began the work of submitting the 14 chapters of rules which will govern the conduct of the assembly to the delegates for approval. After quickly approving article one of the first chapter, the delegates bogged down on article two, which states that the purpose of the assembly is to write a constitution, and recessed until 12 October.

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4. General Hoang Xuan Lam, I Corps commander and a member of the Dai Viets (a nationalist party), is reportedly keeping close tabs on the assembly proceedings through two Dai Viet deputies from central Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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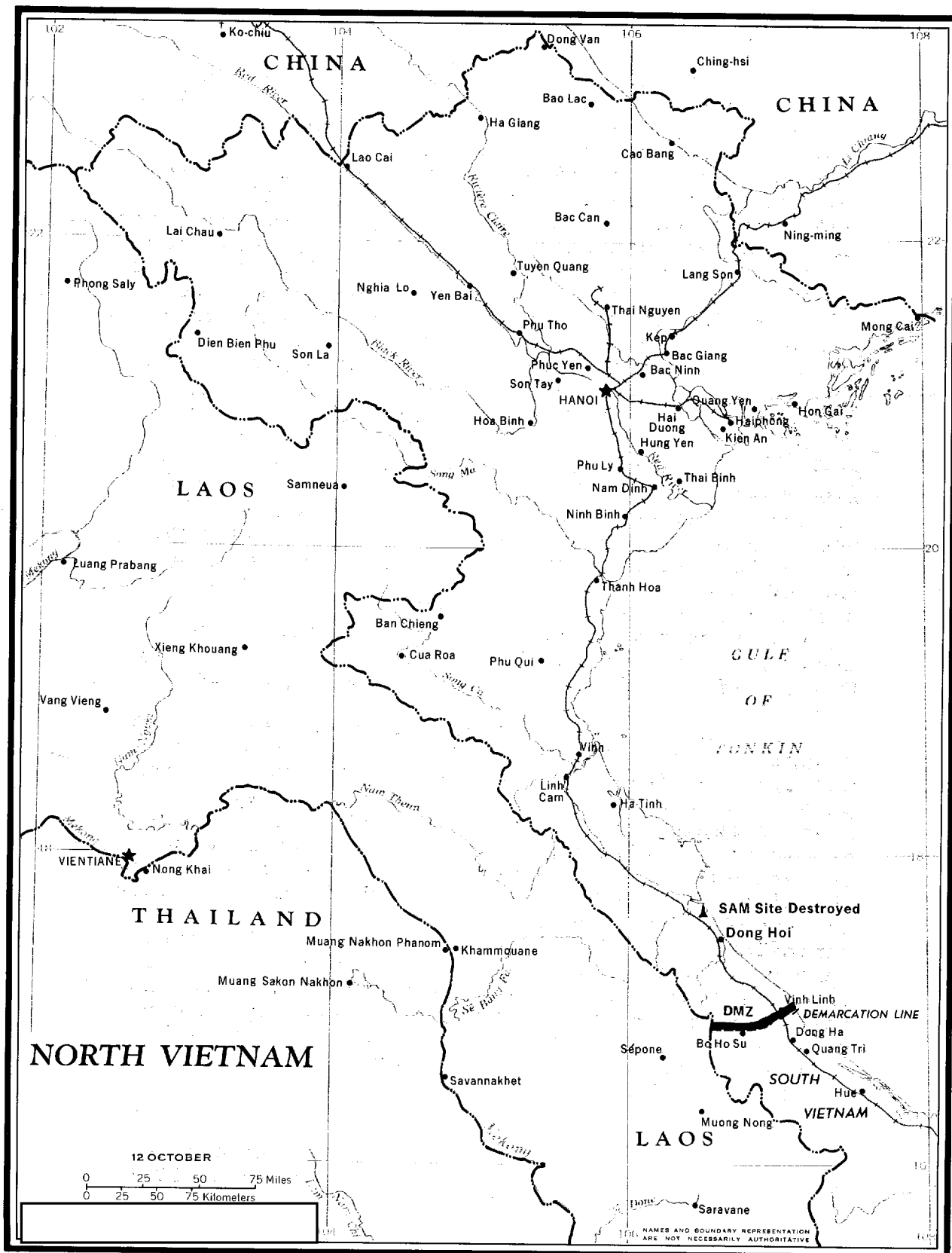
[REDACTED] General Lam is supporting the Dai Viets now in hopes that they will preserve his position in I Corps and in the military establishment. There is some indication [REDACTED] of a developing rapprochement between some civilian and military Dai Viets and government leaders, with an eye toward influencing their representation in future government offices.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Two USAF F-105s flying near Dong Hoi on 12 October apparently destroyed a surface-to-air missile complex which was located closer to the DMZ than any site yet discovered in North Vietnam. In recent weeks electronic and photoreconnaissance reports have indicated a shift of North Vietnamese SAM units to the south in an apparent effort to counter stepped-up US air operations near the DMZ.

2. One of the US planes, an F-105F, carried a two-man crew and electronic equipment capable of picking up signals from an SA-2's FANSONG missile guidance radar. These radiations led the flight to an area 10 miles northwest of Dong Hoi, but no visual contact with the site was possible due to elaborate camouflage. No SAM was launched at the US aircraft, but the F-105F crew noted that the FANSONG radar continued to broadcast intermittently. Since July 1966 DRV missile sites have been observed limiting their guidance radar transmissions to short bursts in an effort to deny US aircraft an electronic fix on their positions.

3. Taking advantage of one prolonged FANSONG signal, the lead F-105 fired a radar-homing SHRIKE missile. By following the path of the SHRIKE, the pilot was able to see the site and observed the missile exploding on the site's radar van. Electronic equipment aboard the aircraft simultaneously registered the disappearance of all radiations from the site. The SHRIKE attack was followed by rocket and strafing runs by both planes, resulting in the explosion of two SA-2 missiles and multiple fires throughout the complex. Seven additional flights of US aircraft were called in to rake the site and take poststrike photography. Preliminary examination of the first photographs showed one missile exploding and considerable damage to launchers and other equipment.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTSA Third East European Official Consults with Hanoi

1. Rumanian Premier Maurer apparently was a third East European official to visit Hanoi in recent weeks.

[redacted] Maurer headed a delegation which passed through Peking on 1 October en route to the North Vietnamese capital for a three-day visit. The delegation returned via Peking. Whereas the other visitors--Czechoslovak Premier Lenart from 23 to 29 September and Bulgarian politburo member and Deputy Premier Mikhaylov who arrived 10 October--were announced and publicly received, Maurer's trip has not yet been publicized by either Hanoi or Bucharest.

2. The Czechs and Bulgarians probably had similar motives in making the trip at this time. They undoubtedly wished to survey at first hand the realities of the situation in North Vietnam--both as to the military and economic needs of the Vietnamese and the final destination of the expanded material aid each country is committed to under new agreements recently signed with Hanoi. The leaders also probably intended the visits to demonstrate to Hanoi continuing solidarity with and support for the North Vietnamese cause. Prague and Sofia also used the trips to encourage a less rigid line by Hanoi on the question of negotiating an end to the war.

3. Although it is not clear why the Rumanians chose to make their trip in secrecy, one element probably was their wish not to appear to be acting in concert with the other Eastern European countries. In addition to a discussion of the situation in North Vietnam and Hanoi's needs, Maurer undoubtedly discussed the sharpening of the Sino-Soviet dispute toward which both countries are determined to follow an independent line.

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